

CHINA MOUNTAIN

WIND POWER PROJECT EIS

NEWSLETTER 2
MARCH 2009

This is the second in a series of newsletters to keep you informed about the China Mountain Wind Energy Project (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project would involve the construction of a 425-megawatt wind power facility in Twin Falls County, Idaho and Elko County, Nevada. The Proposed Project would include land owned by several parties, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM, 65%), Idaho State Department of Lands (7%), and private owners (28%).

As stated in the first newsletter, the Jarbidge Field Office of the BLM is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the impact that the construction and operation of the proposed facilities could have on natural and cultural resources and local communities. The EIS is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and associated regulations. This newsletter provides an update on where we are in the EIS process, the concerns and issues that were raised by the public during the scoping period (April - July 2008), and the next steps in the project. For more information, or to review the first project newsletter, please visit the project website at: www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html.

Where are we in the EIS process?

The flow chart on page 2 shows the EIS process and estimated schedule. The purpose of the first step in the process, project scoping, was to identify questions, issues, and concerns from Tribes, other State or Federal agencies, and the public. The input received during scoping provides direction for developing and conducting the EIS studies and identifies issues that the EIS should address. Since public scoping, the project team has been collecting data on land uses and other resources in the project area to better understand the local environment. This information has been gathered from existing documents and reports, maps, agency files or databases, and field surveys.

Currently, the project team is evaluating the resource information collected over the past several months to determine and estimate impacts on the environment that could result from the Proposed Project. Once potential impacts are identified, resource specialists will develop options to minimize, or mitigate, those impacts. The project team also is developing alternatives to the Proposed Project. These alternatives include different scenarios for constructing a wind power facility at China Mountain and will be described and considered in the EIS.



Wild Horse Wind Project – Ellensburg, WA

Meteorological Towers EA

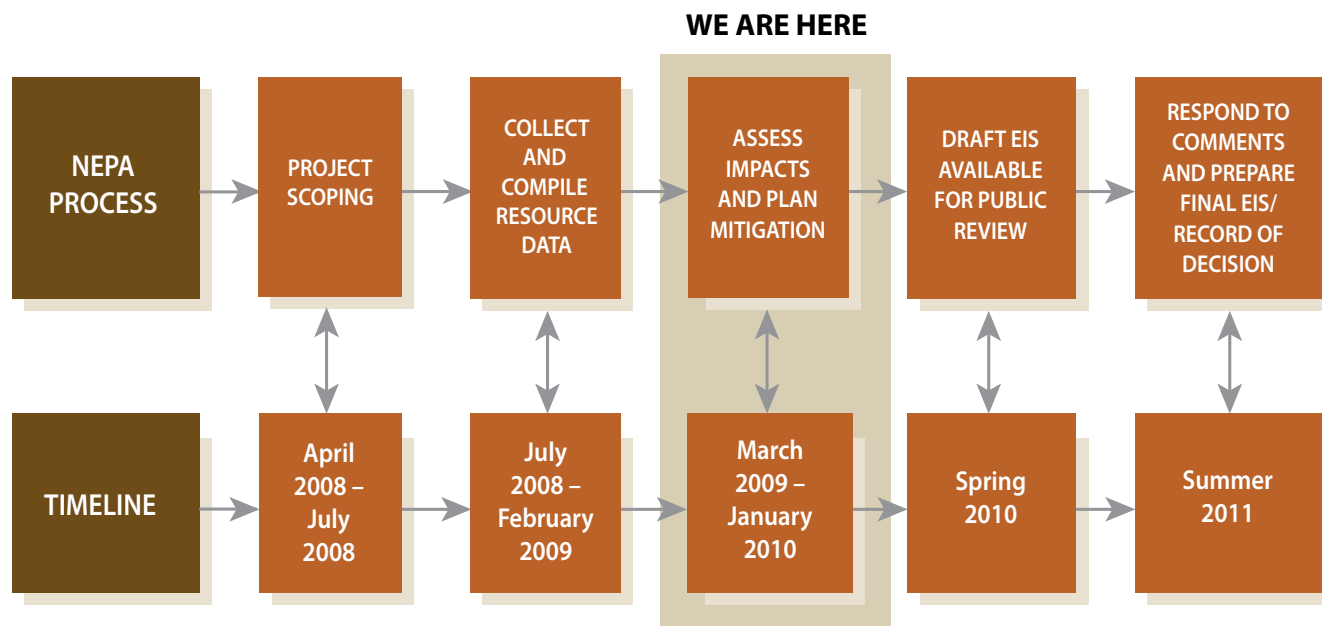
In an effort to collect additional wind speed data on China Mountain, under a separate application and action, BLM has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the placement of three additional, temporary meteorological towers. As part of the EA process, BLM completed site-

BLM

Jarbidge Field Office / Twin Falls, Idaho



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specific surveys for cultural resources, visual resources, and special status species. BLM also completed a study of sage grouse use near the proposed meteorological towers. If the EA is approved and the three meteorological towers are constructed, BLM will repeat the study to measure sage grouse reaction to the presence of the towers. The EA is scheduled for release in late March of 2009 and will be available on the project web site www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html.

What we heard from you during scoping

Three public scoping meetings were held in late June 2008. These meetings were held in Elko and Jackpot, Nevada, and in Twin Falls, Idaho. A total of 45 people attended the scoping meetings, and the BLM received 23 comment letters through mail or email. The majority of



China Mountain Scoping Meeting, Elko, NV

comments focused on fish and wildlife, special status species (notably the greater sage-grouse), and cumulative impacts (the impact of the Proposed Project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions). Other issues included concern about the completeness and adequacy of available resource information (data gaps), and mitigation that could be conducted before and after construction. These concerns will be addressed through additional data collection and analyzed in the EIS, unless the BLM has determined an issue to be beyond the scope of the Proposed Project or BLM authority.

Following is a summary of the concerns and suggestions that were raised most frequently during the scoping process. A detailed report of what the project team learned during scoping is available in the Final Scoping Report, available from the BLM or on the project web site www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html.

Fish and Wildlife

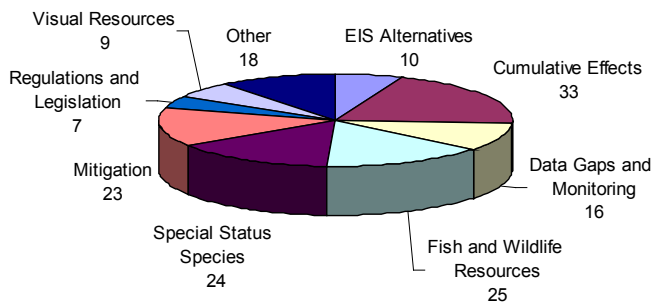
Fish and wildlife accounted for 25 percent of the issues identified in public scoping comments. Specific concerns for fish and wildlife and their habitat included effects of construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project; the need for both pre-construction surveys and long-term monitoring and evaluation of the project; how project effects would be mitigated; and effects to migratory birds, bats, and big game.

Special Status Species

Concerns regarding special status species accounted for 24 percent of issues identified during scoping. The majority of these comments questioned the effect of construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project on special status fish, wildlife, and plant species; what measures would be used to avoid or minimize potential impacts to special status species; effects of the Proposed Project to greater sage-grouse; and the effects of the Proposed Project on key habitat for greater sage-grouse and pygmy rabbit.

Cumulative Impacts

Questions about potential cumulative impacts from the project accounted for 33 percent of the issues identified during scoping. Most comments in this category questioned what the combined effect of the Proposed Project would be with existing and proposed meteorological towers at China Mountain. Additional comments focused on the effects of the Proposed Project combined with effects of other land management actions and wildfire on sagebrush habitat.



Total Number of Individual Comments by Topic

What's next?

The next step of the process is to document the results of the project studies in the Draft EIS. It is anticipated the Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review in early 2010. During the review period, the BLM will conduct additional public meetings to receive comments on the Draft EIS. These meetings will be announced in a future newsletter, on the project website, and in local media outlets. The BLM will compile and review all comments received on the Draft EIS and prepare responses to those comments for inclusion in a Final EIS. After a required protest period, the BLM will issue a

Record of Decision (ROD) on the Proposed Project. If you would like to receive a copy of the Draft EIS for review, please return the response sheet included with this



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newsletter (inside page) and mail to the address provided on the form. Only those who request a copy of the Draft EIS will receive one. However, the document will be posted for review on the project website and will be available for review at the BLM Jarbidge, Idaho and Wells, Nevada Field Offices.

For more information:

For additional information, please visit our project website at www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html. If you have questions, would like to be on the mailing list, or would like to speak to a project representative, email id_chinamtn_eis@blm.gov or contact Ester McCullough, BLM Project Manager for the China Mountain Wind Energy Project EIS, at (208) 735-2072.



View southwest from top of China Mountain

CHINA MOUNTAIN WIND POWER PROJECT EIS



China Mountain Project Area Vicinity

Bureau of Land Management
Jarbridge Field Office
2536 Kimberly Road
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

